Preparatory Committee of the 2018 Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons

Statement by Finland
New York, 19 March 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

Please allow me to begin by congratulating you on your appointment and thank you for the effective and transparent way that you have conducted your preparations for this meeting. Thank you also for your useful outline document which will undoubtedly be helpful in guiding our work towards the Review Conference. In addition to the statement by the European Union I would like to emphasize some key issues we see as important from a national point of view.

Mr. Chairperson,

Few countries, if any, are left untouched by the negative impacts of illicit flows of small arms and light weapons. The PoA has for its part had a positive impact in curbing this problem and mobilising all stakeholders. However, implementation still needs to be strengthened. By poorly controlling the spread of these weapons we create the conditions for illegal armed groups to wreak havoc, for terrorists to thrive and for social and economic progress to stall. We must do better.

As stated in the Biennial Meeting of States outcome document, the illicit trade of SALW has clear implications for the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Small arms control is no longer merely a disarmament issue; it is closely connected to the larger question of sustainable development. Countries suffering from armed violence, crime and conflict cannot fully reach their potential if diversion and illicit flows of small arms and light weapons are not addressed. Strengthening the link between PoA implementation and the SDGs should be a key aspect of our discussions at the Review Conference. As the UN Secretary General put it; “we need to focus on disarmament that saves lives”.

Implementing the PoA cannot be done comprehensively if we target only half of the population. Enhancing the role of women in society and bringing gender aspects into the core of PoA implementation is smart, cost-effective and has proven to provide more long-lasting results. The Review Conference should strengthen and further support policies and programmes that take into account the different impacts of illicit small arms flows on women, men, boys and girls. Finland strongly supports, in words and deeds, the meaningful participation and representation of women in policymaking, planning and implementation of the PoA.
The entry into force of the **Arms Trade Treaty** in 2014 was a landmark moment for international arms control. Also after our Presidency of the ATT last year, Finland continues to be actively engaged in the ATT process. We see the implementation of the ATT as mutually reinforcing with other international instruments with similar objectives, such as the PoA and the UN Firearms Protocol. The ATT is now an existing fact and not addressing its positive synergies with the PoA in the Review Conference outcome document would be an omission. Does the Review Conference want to have a realistic bird’s eye view of the small arms landscape or do we want to be more like an ostrich and bury our heads in the sand? The choice is ours to make.

While we discuss the control and better oversight of small arms and light weapons we must not forget the key component of these lethal instruments: **ammunition**. Finland strongly supports the inclusion of ammunition in the scope of the PoA. As with the weapons the PoA covers, so too would the inclusion of ammunition only cover their illicit transfer and uncontrolled circulation. This would assist in keeping ammunition away from organised crime groups and terrorist organisations but would not create obstacles to legal and controlled trade. Therefore it would be natural that ammunition be included as part of the PoA’s scope.

To understand the complex nature of SALW control we all benefit from expert advice by representatives of **academia, civil society and industry**. We are glad to see many of them here today. Finland supports cooperation with NGOs and think-tanks in various ways; one channel being the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation. **UNSCAR** continues to be a valuable platform for coordinating voluntary support and we invite all countries interested in supporting work in this field to join as donors.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairperson, Finland is grateful for this opportunity to share views and we are looking forward to continued close cooperation with your team, the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and all Member States to make the Third Review Conference a success. You may rest assured of our full support.

Thank you.

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